

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

THE CONTINUING VOYAGE OF NUH

By Shaykh Ahmed Abdur Rashid



Second in a seven part series:

ULU-L-AZIM
THE GREAT ONES



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Lecture by Shaykh Ahmed Abdur Rashid
at the Zaawiyah of
Shaykh Nooruddeen Durkee
Charlottesville, VA
16 December 2012
3 Safar 1434



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Surah al-Fatiha

AL-HAMDU-LI-LLÄHI,
MUQALIBA-L-QULÛBI WA-L-ABSÄR.
ALLÄHUMMA THABIT QULÛBANA
‘ALA SIRÄTIKA-L-QAWIM,
WA-J‘ALNÄ LI-WAJHIKA MUTTAJIHIN,
WA SALLI ‘ALA-Sh-ShAFI‘I-L-HABIB,
RAHMATIL-‘ÄLAMIN,
WA MANÄRI-L-NAJIYIN, WA MARSÄ-L-‘ÄRIFIN.

Praise be to Allah,
the Turner of the hearts and sight.
O Allah, fix our hearts
on the best of Your ways,
and make us face You in our way,
and bestow blessings on the beloved intercessor,
the mercy of all the worlds,
the lighthouse of the survivors, the harbor of the knowers.

YÄ MAWJÛDAN ‘INDA-Sh-ShADÄÄ’IDI
YÄ KHAFIYYA-L-LUTFI, YÄ LATIFA-S-SUN‘I.
YÄ HALIMAN, LÄ YA’JILUQDI HÄJATI
BI-RAHMATIKA, YÄ ARHAMA-R-RAHIMIN.
SUBHÄNAKA ‘ALÄ HILMIKA BA‘DA ‘ILMIK.
SUBHÄNAKA ‘ALÄ ‘AFWIKA BA‘DA QUDRATIK.

O Existent One, O Thou Who are Present in all difficulties.
O Thou of Hidden Kindness, of Subtle making.
O Gentle One, Who does not hasten, fulfill my need,
with Thy Mercy, O most Merciful of the merciful.
Glory be to Thee, on Thy Grace, after Thy Knowledge.
Glory be to Thee, on Thy forgiveness, after Thy Power.

INTRODUCTION

There are those who say that Allah (*Subhānahu wa taʿālaa*) manifests in every creature in a specific or particular way. It is He Who reveals Himself in every meaning, just as it is He who remains hidden from all understanding, except for the person who recognizes the exterior world (the world of form) as an expression of the Divine Name, *ad-Dhāhir* / the Apparent. The understanding the human being strives for is the understanding of the exterior and the interior. Allah says in Surah al-Fusilat:

سَرَّيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ
أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ

SANURIHIM AYĀTINĀ FI-L-ʾAFĀQI WA FI
AÑFUSIHIM HATTĀ YATABAYYANA LAHUM
ANNAHU-L-HAQQU AWA LAM YAKFI BIRABBIKA
ANNAHU ʿALĀ KULLI SHAYʾIN SHAHĪD?

We will show them Our signs on the horizons and in themselves, until it becomes clear to them that this [Message] is the Truth. Is it not enough that your Lord is watching over all things? [41:53]

This reality forms the foundation for the duality and the challenge that is the lives of the Prophets (peace be on all of them), and also of those who seek to follow in their footsteps. At one and the same time, there is an exterior and an interior reality. The form of our human appearance has no meaning unless the soul motivates it. Just as Hazrat Adam ؑ was not a human being until the Spirit was breathed into him, we are not complete human beings until we remember the inner breath of the soul, until we understand that everything in this creation is named, created, and owned by Allah (*Subhānahu wa taʿālaa*). Every part of this creation praises and glorifies Allah.

In Surah al-Isra, it says:

تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَاوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا
يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ خَلِيفًا عَفُورًا

TUSABBIHU LAHU-S-SAMĀWĀTU-S-SABʿU WA-L-
ʾARḌU WA MAÑ FĪHINNA WAʾIM-MĪÑ SHAYʾIN
ILLĀ YUSABBIHU BIHAMDIHI WA LĀKIL-LĀ
TAFQAHŪNA TASBĪHAHUM INNAHU KĀNA
HALĪMAN GhAFŪRĀ.

The seven heavens and the earth and all that is within them glorify Him, and there is not anything that does not exalt Him by His Praise, but you do not understand their glorification. Surely, He is Forbearing, Ever-Forgiving. [17:44]

The sunset, the stars in the sky, the constellations in space, the leaf on the branch, the bird in her nest... all are praising Allah (*Subhānahu wa taʿālaa*), Who is at once the One Who praises (because He is the soul, and the spirit, and the *baaṭin* of everything), and the One Who is being praised. It is on this foundation that I want to speak to you today about Sidna Nuh ؑ.

When we affirm the transcendental reality of Allah in every circumstance, we are affirming not only His presence and His immanence, but we are also acknowledging that in this dynamic there is no limit. Whatever we understand, Allah (*Subhānahu wa taʿālaa*) is more. As far as our imagination, understanding, or acceptance can reach, Allah (*Subhānahu wa taʿālaa*) is more. At the foundation of this unity, and separation from unity, lies the reason why the *ambiyaa*' and the messengers were sent to this world. Each of the *ambiyaa*' transcended the limitations that were surrounding them: Sidna Musa ؑ overcomes the Pharaoh, and the worshippers of the form of the golden ram. Daoud ؑ overcomes Goliath (Galut). Sulayman must convince the Queen of Sheba (Bilqis) to be a believer; Prophet Isa ؑ, the moneylenders; and, of course, Rasuulu-Llaah brings it full

circle with the destruction of the idols in the Kaaba. The final transition will be with the Mahdi, who will bring a time of peace and the end of the world.

NUH AND THE IDOL-WORSHIPPERS

Sidna Nuh عليه السلام and the other prophets we are discussing in this series were all sent to re-balance their communities, and hence our world. They are not just bringing a message; they are contravening this misbalance, ignorance, and savagery that exists in the world to this day, as we know. We may see it as starving children in the world, or as the ones murdered in Connecticut, or as the innocents being killed in Afghanistan or Syria. The names and the faces may be different, but in truth, the souls are the same. The hearts are the same. We are all familiar with the story of Sidna Nuh عليه السلام; in fact this is one story that is known and told quite similarly around the world by people of all the major religions. I will review it quickly, as a way to dive more deeply into the implication it has to our lives here and now. To understand this story is to acknowledge the perfection of Allah (Subhaanahu wa 'Alaahu), al-Alali, the Immanent. But it is also to experience the patience, the knowledge, and the *hikmah* (wisdom) of the Messenger in his interface between what is immanent and what is apparent; between the potential of the individual or community, and the reality of what they are capable of. This is the story of the contrast between humility and arrogance, a message resounding over the millenniums. As nations rise and fall, the deaf and blind followers of idols of stone, money, power, and fame lead others over the cliff to their demise—to a flood where few survive, and even the nearest and the dearest perish. But let us begin at the beginning.

The Prophet Nuh عليه السلام was a direct descendent of Seth عليه السلام, the third son and spiritual heir of Adam عليه السلام and Hawa عليه السلام. His full name was *Nuh ibn Lamakh ibn Mitoselekh ibn Enoch ibn Yardh ibn Makhalabil ibn Canaan ibn Anush ibn Seth ibn Adam*. The lineage is important to know—not just our lineage. We will find these names in the Qur'an, Torah, the Psalms, and the Gospels. But only the Qur'an remains exactly as it was revealed, so it is the only text we can really rely on. There is some controversy about the length of time between the birth

of Sidna Nuh and the death of Sidna Adam. Ibn Abbas narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said the period between Adam and Nuh was 10 centuries (Sahih Hadith in Bukhari). What's important for the story is that for many, many generations, the descendants of Hazrat Adam عليه السلام, the people to whom Nuh عليه السلام was sent, had been worshipping idols. They believed these gods would bring them protection, goods, and prosperity. Qur'an tells us in Surah Hud that they gave them names and made them to represent certain powers like virility, mutability, beauty, strength, swiftness, and insight. Allah tells us in Surah Nuh that the people were very attached to these gods, saying to each other and Nuh عليه السلام:

لَا تَذَرْنِ آهْلَكُمْ وَلَا تَذَرْنِ وِدًّا وَلَا سُوءًا وَلَا يَعْثُوتُ وَيَعُوقُ وَنَسْرًا

...LĀ TADHARUNNA ALIHATAKUM WA LĀ TADHARUNNA WA DDAÑW-WA LĀ SUWĀ'ANW-WA LĀ YAGHÜTHA WA YA'ÜQA WA NASRĀ.

Do not forsake your gods and do not forsake Wadd or Suwa or Yaghuth or Ya'uq or Nasr. [71:23]

Some say that these were the names of good people whose memory they tried to keep alive by building statues, but they began to worship the statues. Finally, after generations, people no longer knew why they had been erected in the first place. Ibn Abbas said,

Following the deaths of these righteous people, Shaytan inspired the people to erect statues in their places where they used to sit. They did this, but the statues were not worshiped until the coming generations deviated from the way of life, and then they worshiped them as idols.

And Ibn Jarir said,

They were righteous people who lived in the period between Adam and Nuh, and who had followers who held them as models. After their deaths, their friends who used to emulate them said, "If we make statues of them, it will be more pleasing to us in our worship and reminders of them." So they built statues. And after they died, others came after them,

and Iblis crept into their minds saying, "Your forefathers used to worship them, and through that worship they got rain. So you should worship them, too."

Worshipping anything other than Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta'alaan*) is, of course, *shirk* and results not only in the loss of personal knowledge of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta'alaan*), but also in the loss of one's ultimate freedom. A great deal of this story, and the story of the prophets, is about freedom. It affects the mind by creating a mindset in which the person rationalizes and excuses what they are doing—a mindset of anxiety. (Did I please or displease this or that god? Did I propitiate it properly or improperly?). Our minds get set on these rituals, and a small and narrow universe of self-centered ideas is born. Then that becomes continued.

The mindset of idol worship is one in which everybody is a victim of circumstance. Its correlative today is in animism. Good people in the jungles of South America are animists. Their whole lives are wrapped round the signs of what is happening. If someone gets sick, some god needs to be propitiated. If some stranger comes, it's a threat and they have to expiate the sin that comes along with that person, as well as the flu and all the other diseases they bring. There's no goal in life that the people can themselves achieve. Instead, the worshipper is always looking for a sign, or a promise, or some kind of response: "If you propitiate this god, rain will come. If the sky is red that means this or that god is angry." Objectification and anthropomorphism limits all possibilities of faith. Thinking and acting like this, over time the people of Nuh's community became very selfish, cruel, ignorant and immoral individuals, foolish, foolhardy, and fearful. So fearful, they became arrogant.

As we discuss the story of Sidna Nuh (عليه السلام) today, I ask you to reflect on the mentality of the idol worshippers, and also on the character of faith and trust that was required in Sidna Nuh (عليه السلام) to counter this mentality. We may have moved beyond the level of simplistic interaction with our environment or "statues" seen at the time of this prophet, but I am not sure human society has moved beyond this mentality of the idol worshipper.

WHO IS SIDNA NUH AND WHAT WAS HIS MESSAGE?

Sidna Nuh (عليه السلام) was the first major messenger after the Prophet Adam (عليه السلام), and the first prophet to encounter idol worship. He was a man, a warner, and a messenger who all the three major monotheistic religions of today remember and believe in as a prophet. Some say he lived 4,000 years ago, other say 20,000 years. Over 950 years he strived to tell people the message. He didn't threaten anyone. He was non-violent. He used kind words and good arguments. He spoke of a merciful and compassionate God. He was not a complicated, intellectual person. He was a good person. He was a humane individual. Allah says in Qur'an:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَلَبِثَ فِيهِمْ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ إِلَّا خَمْسِينَ
عَامًا فَأَخَذَهُمُ الطُّوفَانُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ

WA LAQAD ARSALNĀ NŪHAN ILĀ QAWMIHI FA-
LABITHA FĪHIM ALFA SANATIN ILLĀ KĦAMSĪNA
‘AMĀN FA-AKĦADĦAHUMU-T-TŪFĀNU WA HUM
DĦĀLĪMŪN.

We sent Nuh as Our messenger to his people, and he remained among them for one thousand years less fifty. And they were taken by the flood and they were oppressors [of themselves and others]. [29:14]

As far as we know, he did not receive a revelation or a miracle from Allah. Instead, Allah inspired Nuh (عليه السلام) with the message in his soul. As Allah tells us in Surah Nuh:

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ أَنْ أَنْذِرْ قَوْمَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ
عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

INNĀ ARSALNĀ NŪHAN ILĀ QAWMIHI AN
AŖDHIR QAWMAKA MIN QABLI ĀNY-
YA'TIYAHUM ʿADHĀBUN ALĪM.

Truly We sent Nuh to his people, [saying to him],
“Warn your people before great suffering comes to
them.” [71:1]

Sidna Nuh ﷺ paid attention to his heart, making *tawajjuh*, and this message was a warning from Allah (*Subḥānahu wa ʿālaahu*) that flows into the heart and soul of every human being. Sometimes it's never, ever, really heard, like an underground river that is never discovered. We say that the *lateefah ruuh* is under the feet of Hazrat Nuh. Some of the qualities of this *lateefah* are patience and perseverance. (After all, he lived for 950 years; he must have been a very patient person). Patience is very important, you understand. When you get sick and go to a doctor, what do they call you? A patient. Why? Because they will take a long time to cure you—maybe. We have to be patient with our illnesses. We have to be patient to overcome our ignorance. He was a patient person.

He tried to point out to the people the mysteries of life and the beauties of the universe – how the night follows the day, how Allah (*Subḥānahu wa ʿālaahu*) designed the balance between the opposites: the night bringing coolness and rest, and the day giving warmth and time for action. He showed his people the incredible order of the universe, and pointed out that the ownership of all this belongs only to Allah (*Subḥānahu wa ʿālaahu*). He spoke to the people of the beauty and glorification of Allah, and how Allah glorified human beings, created them, provided them with sustenance, and all the blessings that came to human beings. He told them that idol worship created differentiation and injustice, and weakness of the mind, and warned them not to worship anyone other than Allah (*Subḥānahu wa ʿālaahu*).

The people heard him, but did not listen. Their minds became less and less clear; they had become more and more degenerated. The people were determined that they were correct, so they rejected him. Unfortunately, this is familiar to us today. People are absolutely sure that what they are teaching or their opinion is correct. We have to

remember what Shaytan said: “I’m better than they are.” Could there be a more ignorant statement uttered by a human being, a more arrogant statement? What is it based on? Is it based on membership in MENSA society or memorizing Qur’an but not understanding what it means? Maybe Allah made your life easy because you were too weak to have a hard one. Maybe Allah gave you health because you weren’t strong enough to have sickness. But without the understanding that there needs to be an interior as well as an exterior, without humility and an acceptance of a greater knowledge, and the possibility of error (hence the need for repentance), people are lost.

Each of the prophets and messengers have carried this same message, bringing a remembrance of the incomparability of Allah, of our Creator, while seeking to unify our awareness of our own self with something that is so much greater that it transcends our capacities to understand, leaving only a taste/*dhawq* of the transcendent mystery. We embrace that mystery as an affirmation of that which transcends our own capacities and capabilities. Just because it is a mystery, we don’t dismiss it. Quite the contrary: we embrace it. It is the proof, if you will, of something that exists beyond us. The reality in the small sense and the Reality in the large sense (Allah) is a dynamic, creative force.

RESPONSE OF THE DISBELIEVERS

The Prophet Nuh ﷺ brought this message and warning, but the people of his community responded with ignorance and pride. In essence, he was shaking them awake from their state of “ignorant sleep.” What happens when someone who you asked to wake you shakes you when you are sound asleep? You get very disoriented, sometimes even angry: “What’s the matter! Why are you shaking me! Stop doing that! What’s going on?” The goal was to help. And at one point, those people asked for help and guidance, if you go back far enough. But the recipient of the help became angry and arrogant. Some people refused to believe him and laughed at him. The rich and strong people, and the powerful rulers looked at these warnings with a lot of distrust, thinking, “We got rich and powerful over this, and if we accept this message, we will be just like everyone else. Don’t talk to me about equity and equality and sharing the burden.”

They believed they would be better off if things stayed the way they were. In Surah Yunus, Allah tells us of this kind of reaction:

بَعَثْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ رَسُولًا إِلَى قَوْمِهِمْ فَجَاءُوهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا بِمَا كَذَّبُوا بِهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ كَذَلِكَ نَطْبَعُ عَلَى قُلُوبِ الْمُعْتَدِينَ

...BA'ATHNĀ MIM BA'DIHI RUSULAN ILĀ QAWMIHIM FA-JĀĀ'UHUM BI-L-BAYYINĀTI FA-MĀ KĀNŪ LIYU'MINŪ BIMĀ KADH-DHABŪ BIHI MIN QABLU KADHĀLIKA NATBA'U 'ALĀ QULŪBI-L-MU'TADĪN.

...We sent Messengers to their people, and they came with Clear Proofs. But they would not believe in that which they had denied before. And so We seal the hearts of the transgressors. [10:74]

Certainly, the hearts of these people were sealed; they did everything they could to demean Nuh ﷺ and lower him in the eyes of the other people. We always tell our children: don't be with people who bring you down to a lower level. Be with the people who raise you up, not with the ones who bring you down. They accused him of being like them (implying he must be self-serving in his aims, because that's what they would be).

فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ مَا تَرَاكَ إِلَّا بَشَرًا مِثْلَنَا وَمَا تَرَاكَ أَتْبَعَكَ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ هُمْ أَرَادُوا بِادْيِ الرَّأْيِ وَمَا نَرَى لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلٍ بَلْ نَظُنُّكُمْ كَاذِبِينَ

FA-QĀLA-L-MALĀ'U ALLADHĪNA KAFARŪ MIN QAWMIHI MĀ NARĀKA ILLĀ BASHARAM-MITHLANĀ WA MĀ NARĀKA ITTABĀ'AKA ILLĀ-LLADHĪNA HUM ARĀDHILUNĀ BĀDIYA-R-RA'YI

WA MĀ NARĀ LAKUM 'ALAYNĀ MIN FA-DLIM BAL NADHUNNUKUM KADHIBĪN.

The chiefs from among his people who covered up [the Truth] said, "We don't see you as anything but a human being like us, and we do not see that [anyone] follows you except the lowest among us, [and then] unthinkingly. And we do not see any merit in you over us; rather, we think that you are liars." [11:27]

This refers to the contempt they had that the followers of Nuh were found only among the lowest classes of people, implying that the elite or the higher classes would listen if he only he would abandon the lower classes. Surely, this sounds vaguely familiar in today's political world of elitism, of "right-to-work laws," of intrusion of the rich and powerful into political action, of bigotry, and racism. This is a familiar story and one that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ encountered years later with the leaders of the Quraysh. But Sidna Nuh ﷺ refused to drive away the poor and low people, and continued to appeal to the powerful people saying:

وَيَا قَوْمِ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مَالًا إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا بِطَارِدِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُوا رَبِّهِمْ وَلَكِنِّي أَرَاكُمْ قَوْمًا يَجْهَلُونَ

وَيَا قَوْمِ مَنْ يَنْصُرُنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ طَرَدْتُهُمْ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَا أَقُولُ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ وَلَا أَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ تَزْدَرِي أَعْيُنُكُمْ لَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ خَيْرًا اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ

WA YĀ QAWMI LĀ AS'ALUKUM 'ALAYHI MĀLAN IN AJRIYA ILLĀ 'ALĀ-LLĀHI WA MĀ ANĀ BITĀRIDIL-LLADHĪNA AMANŪ INNAHUM

MULĀQŪ RABBIHIM WA LĀKINNI ARĀKUM
QAWMAŅ TAJHALŪN.

WA YĀ QAWMI MAŅY-YAŅSURUNĪ MINA-LLĀHI
IŅ TARADTUHUM AFALĀ TADHAKKARŪN.

WA LĀ AQŪLU LAKUM 'IŅDĪ KHAZĀA'INU-LLĀHI
WA LĀ A'LAMU-L-GHAYBA WA LĀ AQŪLU INNI
MALAKUŅW-WA LĀ AQŪLU LI-LLADHĪNA
TAZDARĪ A'YUNUKUM LAŅY-YU'TIYAHUMU-
LLĀHU KHAYRAN ALLĀHU A'LAMU BIMĀ FĪ
AŅFUSIHIM...

O my people, I ask of you no wealth for it. My reward is none but Allah. I am not going to drive away those who believe. Surely, they are going to meet their Lord, but I see that you are a people who are ignorant.

O my people, who will help me against Allah if I drove them away? Will you not then give a thought?

I do not say to you that with me are the treasures of Allah, nor that I know the unseen, nor do I say that I am an angel. And I do not say of those whom your eyes look down upon that Allah will not bestow any good upon them. Allah knows what is in their inner selves. [11:29-31]

But argumentation, personal pride, and the economic and social interests of these people wouldn't let them hear. The rulers became tired of his arguments, saying:

يَا نُوحُ قَدْ جَادَلْتَنَا فَكُنتَ جِدَالَنَا فَأْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ
الصَّادِقِينَ

YĀ NŪHU QAD JĀDALTANĀ FA-AKTHARTA
JĪDĀLANĀ FA'TINĀ BIMĀ TA'IDUNĀ IŅ KUŅTA
MINA-S-ŠADIQĪN.

O Nuh, you have disputed with us, and much have you prolonged the dispute with us. Now bring upon us what you threaten us with, if you are the truthful! [11:32]

Nuh responds in the manner of prophets:

إِنَّمَا يَأْتِيكُمْ بِهِ اللَّهُ إِنْ شَاءَ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ

INNAMĀ YA'TĪKUM BIHI-LLĀHU IŅ SHĀA'A WA
MĀ AŅTUM BIMU'JIZĪN.

Allah alone will bring it [down] upon you if He wills, and you shall not elude it. [11:33]

Meaning, "Not me; I never said I could do that. I'm just telling you what's going to happen." Even with this response he is modeling for the idolaters the change of mindset needed to break the cycle of ignorance. He is not saying, "Believe in me. I'm your leader, so listen to me." No. This is just the truth. He is seeking to change them from people who think they can control their destiny, to accepting that their destiny and its timing are all in Allah's hands.

Can your destiny change? Sure. It's in Allah's hand. So how do you have to act? You have to act the way you have to act, because you don't know. You don't know what's written in the *Lawhim Mahfūd*. You don't know if on page 3 it says that this is going to happen to you, and on page 4, Allah changes it. So you have to live a certain way. Is it written that you are going to change? Sure, it is written, but you are never going to read that. The only choice we have is to try to live a life of goodness. So, does it matter it is written? On the one hand, maybe it does. That is a statement about faith and trust, but it also matters you are never going to read it. We don't know – maybe there is an open day in the library in Paradise. Maybe you will get an invitation. Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ʿalaa*) says, "Come on in and read your page. See how good you did." And you say, "Well, *alḥamdulī-LLāh*, I did well enough to get here!"

At the same time as he is carrying on this dialogue with the disbelievers, Nuh ﷺ is having an on-going conversation with Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ʿalaaahu*), saying:

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي دَعَوْتُ قَوْمِي لَيْلًا وَنَهَارًا

فَلَمْ يَزِدْهُمْ دُعَائِي إِلَّا فِرَارًا

وَإِنِّي كُلَّمَا دَعَوْتُهُمْ لِتَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ جَعَلُوا أَصَابِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِمْ وَاسْتَغْشَوْا

ثِيَابَهُمْ وَأَصْرُوا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا اسْتِكْبَارًا

QĀLA RABBI INNĪ DAʿAWTU QAWMĪ LAYLANW-
WA NAHĀRĀ, FA-LAM YAZIDHUM DUʿĀʾĪ ILLĀ
FIRĀRĀ.

WA'INNĪ KULLAMĀ DAʿAWTUHUM LITAGHFI-
LAHUM JAʿALŪ ASĀBĪʾAHUM FĪ ĀDHĀNIHIM WA-
STAGHSHAW THİYĀBAHUM WA ASARRŪ WA-
STAKBARŪ ISTIKBĀRĀ.

My Lord, truly I have called to my people by night and by day—but my calling only increased their flight.

And truly, every time I call them that You may forgive them, they put their fingers in their ears and wrap themselves in their clothes and persist [in their refusal] and magnify their pride. [71:5-7]

There is a great term for that in English; it's call "stonewalling." Stonewalling has an analogical reality with Sidna Musa and Khidr also. Listening to this, you can hear Sidna Nuh calling out to Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ʿalaaahu*), the frustration he must have experienced: "Everything I do, they run away from. Whatever I ask, they do the opposite. What else can I say that will help them?" Are there not parents who say that of their children? Are we blessed to just not have to say that to a child? In Surah Yunus, Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ʿalaaahu*) reminds us of how Nuh was guided to respond to these people who refused to hear or to change the course they were on:

وَأْتِلْ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ نُوحٍ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّ كَذِبَكُمْ عَلَيَّ وَمِثْلَ مَا أَتَيْتُكُمْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَتُكَلِّمُونَ اللَّهَ بِكُفْرٍ وَاسْتَكْبَارٍ
وَتُكَلِّمُونَ اللَّهَ بِكُفْرٍ وَاسْتَكْبَارٍ

WA-TLU ʿALAYHIM NABA NŪHIN IDH QĀLA
LIQAWMIHI YĀ QAWMI IN KĀNA KABURA
ʿALAYKUM MAQĀMĪ WA TADHKIRĪ BĪʾYĀTI-
LLĀHI FA-ʿALĀ-LLĀHI TAWAKKALTU FA-AJMIʿU
AMRAKUM WA SHURAKĀAʾAKUM...

And recite to them the story of Nuh, when he said to his people, "Oh my people! If my presence and my reminding you of the Signs of Allah is repugnant to you, then upon Allah I have placed my trust, so decide your plan and [call upon] your partners..." [10:71]

"There is no compulsion in Islam. I can't make you choose the right way; make your decision. I have placed my trust in Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ʿalaaahu*)." The depth and breadth of this story is endless as it applies to today. The task, the courage, the faith to trust in Allah's will and measure ones effort (i.e. reward) in those terms alone is overwhelming, and beyond the ken of most human beings today.

This story of the personal struggle of Sidna Nuh ﷺ is one that is personally meaningful to me, and I assume to many of you too, as it is reflective of the many stories in life of people who have doubted us, or who have left us, or left the path, or the community, or left Islam, or belief, because they are tired of being reminded of the Signs of Allah, or because they think they have a better plan or way. In those moments we know, as people of faith—a faith often challenged—that they are making the wrong choices; and yet we are not able to do anything about it. Ultimately, we must, like Sidna Nuh, trust in the value of humility, the power of *iman*, and in the unique destiny that Allah has written for each one of us.

THE FLOOD

By the guidance of Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*), Nuh faithfully continued his appeal for 950 years. He continued with patience, responding to the sarcasm, and ignorance, and anger, hour after hour, day after day, month after month, year after year, century after century. He admonishes these people and calls them to Allah secretly and openly, in groups and in private conversation. He gives them examples and explains the signs. He shows Allah's ability in the formation of His creatures. Nine hundred fifty years is a long time to talk to people. We get tired when we have to repeat ourselves more than once. How many parents have said to their children, "How many times have I told you... (...to clean your room, to pick up your socks, to do your homework...)? How many generations of people do you think Sidna Nuh was speaking to? Generation after generation, he is giving the same message and getting the same responses, the same frustrations.

Think about trying to renew the message to every new generation, understanding that the children are brought up by the parents who teach them the same thing. Then it becomes over time part of the cultural tradition—until their natural disposition was to reject believing and follow untruth instead of the truth. It became their way. It became their truth. The untruth became the truth. They could not be guided. Sidna Nuh ﷺ saw that not only was the number of believers not increasing, but it was decreasing. Then there came a day when Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) revealed to Nuh ﷺ that no others would believe; there were no more people left to convince. No one else was going to be born; no soul was coming to the world, in this period of time, that was going to believe—because Allah knows every soul. At his point, Nuh prayed:

رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ ذَرِيَّةً
إِنَّكَ إِن تَذَرَهُمْ يَضِلُّوا عِبَادَكَ وَلَا يَلِدُوا إِلَّا فَاِجْرًا كَفَّارًا

...RABBI LĀ TADHAR 'ALĀ-L-'ARDI MINA-L-KĀFIRĪNA DAYYĀRĀ.

INNAKA IN TADHARHUM YUDILLŪ 'IBĀDAKA
WA LĀ YALIDŪ ILLĀ FA-AJIRĀN KAFFĀRĀ.

My Lord, do not leave one of the disbelievers to inhabit the earth. Truly, if You leave them, they will mislead Your worshippers and will beget nothing except lying disbelievers. [71:26-27]

These are not the words of someone who is trying to get rid of people. These are the words of someone who has tried for hundreds of years to change the dynamic toward the truth. Now what happens is a very interesting and thought-engaging reality that leads us to yet another act of submission and faith. Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) accepted Nuh's prayer. He passed judgment on the disbelievers and ordered the Flood. In some sense, it is hard for us to understand how or why Allah—the Universally Merciful and Singularly Compassionate—would wipe out an entire community. But we must remember that at this point, Sidna Nuh has spent almost a millennium doing absolutely everything he can for the people, and now Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) is telling him that the only thing possible is to save those from the community who are good. This concept and ideology has been co-opted by some people in the world today, who think they are chosen to know what is the only good in the world. They don't have the relationship, whoever they may be, with Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) that Nuh had, let alone that many generations of effort, let alone the patience, the piety, and the humility. As we know from Surah Hud, Allah commanded:

وَاصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحْيِنَا وَلَا تُخَاطِبْنِي فِي الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِنَّهُمْ مُعْرِضُونَ

WA-SNA'I-L-FULKA BPA'YUNINĀ WA WAHYINĀ
WA LĀ TUKHĀTIBNĪ FI-LLADHĪNA DHĀLAMŪ.
INNAHUM MUGHRAQŪN.

Build the ship under Our Eyes and [by] Our Inspiration, and do not speak to Me on behalf of those who do wrong. Surely, they will drown. [11:37]

Even as he is building this ship, the people continue to harass and belittle him. As Allah tells us, also in Surah Hud:

وَيَصْنَعُ الْفُلَكَ وَكُلَّمَا مَرَّ عَلَيْهِ مَلَأَ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُ قَالَ إِنْ تَسْخَرُوا مِنَّا فَإِنَّا نَسْخَرُ مِنْكُمْ كَمَا تَسْخَرُونَ

WA YASNA'U-L-FULKA WA KULLAMĀ MARRA
‘ALAYHI MALA’UM-MIN QAWMIHI SAKHIRŪ
MINHU QĀLA “IN TASKHARŪ MINNĀ FA’INNĀ
NASKHARU MINKUM KAMĀ TASKHARŪN.”

And he built the ship, and every time a group of self-important ones from his people passed by, they ridiculed him. He said “If you ridicule us, then we will ridicule you just as you ridicule us.” [11:38]

It is easy to hear their sarcasm: “O Nuh, does carpentry appeal to you more than prophet-hood now? Why are you building an ark so far from the sea? Are you going to drag it to the water?” This sarcastic and belittling voice is one that we hear constantly in our society today—voices that put down faith, sincerity, and humility, and care and concern for others, until a horrible tragedy occurs. Then all of a sudden, people wake up for a moment from their slumber, and the community gets together—as it should! And people’s hearts are opened, and their eyes cry tears—as they should. But those eyes are blind also to how many children are dying every day of hunger. Does it mean that one is better than the other? Of course not. If the heart is moved by something, maybe it will be moved by something else, too. Is it not possible that if the heart is moved by what happened in Connecticut, that same heart may be moved by what is happening in Syria? *Inshaa’a-Llaah*. “Do you really believe that? Are you going to accept that? How long are you going to wait?” Sometime, this voice comes from within us, as well as from those around us. But Nuh

ﷺ models total submission, total acceptance of the truth. In those 950 years, he believed that somehow the people would listen, somehow they would be saved. He tells everyone that Allah is Merciful and Compassionate. But at some point, he realizes that the Mercy and Compassion of Allah is also to rid the earth of these terrible people.

We know that there are people all over the world today who are so corrupted that there is no hope for them in this life. People who kill and enslave for the aims of power or economy; people who are motivated entirely by greed, with no moral or ethics of any kind—we have only to turn on the news to hear of these people. They are of the lost! There is no possibility for them. If you could get these tyrants off the face of the earth, wouldn’t this earth be a better place? Yes, but you can’t; only Allah can. So give up the idea that you or I can, but work for the good, because we are admonished: *ma’ruuf* and *munkar*. But now, as in the time of Sidna Nuh, it is not our decision to make; Allah makes that decision.

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّورُ قُلْنَا احْمِلْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ
أُنْثَيْنِ وَأَهْلِكَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ وَمَنْ آمَنَ وَمَا آمَنَ مَعَهُ إِلَّا
قَلِيلٌ

HATTĀ IDHĀ JĀA’A AMRUNĀ WA FA-ARA-T-
TANNŪRU QULNĀ IHMIL FIHĀ MIN KULLIN
ZAWJAYNI ITHNAYNI WA AHLAKA ILLĀ MAN
SABAQA ‘ALAYHI-L-QAWLU WA MAN ĀMANA WA
MĀ ĀMANA MA’AHU ILLĀ QALIL.

[So it went] until Our Command came, and the surface of the ground gushed forth [water]. We said, “Load in [it] one pair of each [kind of animal], and your family – except those upon whom [Our] sentence has been passed—and bring [on board] all who believe.” But none had come to faith with him save a few. [11:40]

Nuh's house overflowed, and he hurried to the ark and summoned the believers. And he took with him a pair, male and female, of every type of animal, bird, and insect. There are different opinions about those who were with Nuh on the ship. Ibn Abbas said there were 80 believers. Qaab al Akbar held that there were 72. Others claim there were only 10. Most people agree there were 72 or 80. But regardless of the exact number, very few of his community came with him; even his own son refused to go.

وَهِيَ تَجْرِي بِهِمْ فِي مَوْجٍ كَالْجِبَالِ وَنَادَى نُوحُ ابْنَهُ وَكَانَ فِي مَعْرٍ
يَا بُنَيَّ ارْكَبْ مَعَنَا وَلَا تَكُنْ مَعَ الْكَافِرِينَ

قَالَ سَآوِي إِلَىٰ جَبَلٍ يَعْصِمُنِي مِنَ الْمَاءِ قَالَ لَا عَاصِمَ الْيَوْمَ مِنْ
أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا مَنْ رَحِمَ وَحَالَ بَيْنَهُمَا الْمَوْجُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُغْرَقِينَ

WA HIYA TAJRI BIHIM FI MAWJIN KA-L-JIBALI
WA NADA NUHUNU IBNAHU WA KANA FI
MA'ZILIN-YA BUNAYYA IRKAB MA'ANA WA LA
TAKUM-MA'A-L-KAFIRIN.

QALA SAA'AWI ILA JABALIN-YA'SIMUNI MINA-
L-MAA'I QALA LA 'ASIMA-L-YAWMA MIN AMRI-
LLAHI ILLA MAR-RAHIMA WA HALA
BAYNAHUMA-L-MAWJU FA-KANA MINA-L-
MUGHRAQIN.

And it sailed with them amidst waves like mountains.
And Nuh called out to his son who was standing apart
[from them], saying "Oh my son! Ride with us and do
not [stay] with those who cover up the truth!"

His son said: "I will take refuge on a mountain [which
will] protect me from the waters." [Nuh] said [to him],
"On this day there is no refuge from the Order of Allah

except for him upon whom He has mercy." And the waves
came between them and he was drowned. [11:42-43]

It is not hard to imagine Nuh's agony in those moments, as he calls out to his son, "Ride with us." He is not saying, "Believe and you get a ride," he's simply saying, "Come with us." But his son "knows better." He has another plan: "I'll go on a mountaintop and I'll be fine." And then it is over. Calmness returns to the earth, the water retreats, the dry land comes again, the sun comes out, and the flood cleansed the earth of those disbelievers.

وَقِيلَ يَا أَرْضُ ابْلَعِي مَاءَكَ وَيَا سَمَاءُ أَقْلِعِي وَغِيضَ الْمَاءُ وَقُضِيَ
الْأَمْرُ وَاسْتَوَتْ عَلَى الْجُودِيِّ وَقِيلَ بُعْدًا لِلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ
وَنَادَى نُوحٌ رَبَّهُ فَقَالَ رَبِّ إِنَّ ابْنِي مِنْ أَهْلِي وَإِنَّ وَعْدَكَ الْحَقُّ
وَأَنْتَ أَحْكَمُ الْحَاكِمِينَ

WA QILA YA ARDU IBLA'I MAA'AKI WA YA
SAMAA'U AQLI'I WA GHIDA-L-MAA'U WA QUDIYA-
L-'AMRU WA-STAWAT 'ALA-L-JUDIYYI WA QILA
BU'DAL-LI-L-QAWMI-Dh-DhALIMIN

WA NADA NUHUR-RABBAHU FA-QALA RABBI
INNA IBNI MIN AHLI WA-INNA WA 'DAKA-L-
HAQQU WA ANTA AHKAMU-L-HAKIMIN.

And it was said, "O Earth, swallow up your water. O
Sky, withhold your rain." And the water diminished and
subsided. The Decree of Allah was fulfilled with the
destruction of the people of Nuh, and the ship rested on
Mount Judi. And it was said, "Away with the unjust
people."

And Nuh called upon his Lord, saying, "My Lord! Truly,
my son was from my family and truly Your Promise

always comes true, and You are the Most Just of Judges.” [11:44-45]

His son has just been drowned. Nuh turns toward Allah, perhaps with an unspoken question, but still affirming his acceptance, trust, and faith in Allah’s greatness. And Allah (*Subhānahu wa ‘ālaahu*) responds to him:

قَالَ يَا نُوحُ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ إِنَّهُ عَمَلٌ غَيْرُ صَالِحٍ فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي
مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنِّي أَعِظُكَ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ

QĀLA YĀ NŪHU INNAHU LAYSA MIN AHLIKA
INNAHU ‘AMALUN GHAYRU SĀLIHIN FA-LĀ
TAS’ALNI MĀ LAYSA LAKA BIHI ‘ILMUN INNI
A‘IDHUKA AN TAKŪNA MINA-L-JĀHILIN.

Allah said, “O Nuh! Surely, he is not of your family. Truly, his deeds were not righteous. Do not ask Me about that of which you [can] have no knowledge. I caution you on this point, lest you be among the ignorant.” [11:46]

And Nuh ﷺ responds saying:

رَبِّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَسْأَلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَإِلَّا تَغْفِرْ لِي
وَتَرْحَمْنِي أَكُنْ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

RABBI INNI A‘UDHU BIKĀ AN AS’ALAKA MĀ
LAYSA LĪ BIHI ‘ILMUŊW-WA’ILLĀ TAGHFIR LĪ
WA TARHAMNI AKUM-MINA-L-KHĀSIRIN.

“O my Lord! I seek refuge with You from asking You that of which I have no knowledge. And unless You

forgive me and have mercy upon me, surely I am of the lost.” [11:47]

Here is the culmination of the test of Nuh’s faith, this reference to the Divine command to “place on board this ship your family,” which Nuh understood as meaning his whole family. He did not understand, nor should he try to understand, the qualifier: “...except those on whom sentence has already been passed.” Nuh has to do his job, but Allah (*Subhānahu wa ‘ālaahu*) has written it out. Some commentators have said that this was not a prayer for the saving of his son, but words spoken after the Ark had come to rest on Mount Judi, after the death of his son. It was an effort on the part of Nuh to understand what would be the condition of his son in the Hereafter. According to Ibn Kathir, Allah’s phrase “he was not of thy family” refers to the fact that he chose to remain with “those who deny the truth” and in this case ‘family’ refers to community of believers, not blood. In virtually every prophetic tradition we see this distinction being made; although, we will look at interesting exceptions in the case of Ibrahim, Isa and Prophet Muhammad in the future, *inshāa’-a-Llāh*.

The constant warning to the warners is that there are things one cannot understand and one should not try to grasp in any way, but through the love of Allah. Knowledge of the reasons of Allah’s decrees and actions, and of the destiny of any human being in the Hereafter is in the realm of things beyond the reach of human perception; [this knowledge is] of the *ghayb* (unseen world). When we stop to think about it, we actually accept many ‘mysteries’ in this world—things that we don’t understand, but we utilize and we benefit from, like nanotechnology, electrical current, gravity, photochemical interactions, dark matter, black holes. We have difficulty accepting when Allah (*Subhānahu wa ‘ālaahu*) tells us not to question or try to understand certain spiritual actions or laws; yet, we accept many of the natural laws we don’t understand, and we utilize them. This is also the topic of arrogance. “If it’s philosophical or theological, of course I can understand it. If it’s scientific or mathematical, well, that’s for the experts.”

Another thing to accept from this account is it is our human destiny to be an individual, and our unique spiritual identity is not something passed on in a bloodline. We choose our path. Some of us even choose our faith. We face the consequences of our decisions alone. Because we are social individuals, the idea of eventually standing alone to account for our actions is anathema to us. But we can't claim that our spiritual beliefs, those deep within us, are part of some kind of group identity. If you love Allah, if you seek the truth, you must know that *subbat* is very important; keeping company is extremely important and extremely necessary. To have right guidance is necessary; to be humble is necessary. But it is you who are seeking that truth, and it is you alone who will find that truth. If you seek it, you will find it – or you will be like Nuh's son. You will find support, and encouragement, and you will also find people trying to dissuade you. But it is you who will have to make that decision. Sometimes you just have to 'build the ark.' At some point, you have to say what you can say, and you have to make a decision to save yourself from the effects of bad company, bad habits, bad thoughts, bad attitudes, or bad circumstances.

This may not be a decision or a process that you can make only once. It is an ongoing struggle, something that must be persevered in, over and over. As Nuh is reminded at the conclusion of this story, as it is related in Surah Hud:

يَا نُوحُ اهْبِطْ بِسَلَامٍ مِنَّا وَبَرَكَاتٍ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّمَّنْ مَعَكَ
وَأُمَّمٌ سَمِعَتْهُمُ ثُمَّ يَمْسُهُم مِّنَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

YĀ NŪHU IHBIT BISALĀMIM-MINNĀ WA
BARAKĀTIN 'ALAYKA WA 'ALĀ UMAMIM-
MIMMAM-MA'AKA WA'UMAMUN
SANUMATTI'UHUM THUMMA YAMASSUHUM
MINNĀ 'ADHĀBUN ALĪM.

Oh Nuh! Disembark in Peace from Us, and Blessings upon you and upon the nations [that will come] from those with you. But [as for those unrighteous] people

[that will come from you and those with you] – We shall allow them to enjoy life and then grievous suffering from Us shall befall them. [11:48]

BUYING FLOOD INSURANCE

Nuh's son is a classic example of someone who refuses to hear and to see. There is a kind of confusion or perplexity that comes along with ignorance. These people believed one thing; now here is this prophet telling them another thing. What do you do? Throughout history we have the messengers trying to share a message, but the only people who receive that message are the ones who really want knowledge. Today, we see that most people don't want knowledge. The average person is not interested in transcending whatever state they are in. For the most part, we are not really motivated to transcend our state of mind. We think we are fine with what we have. Even when Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) is right before them, even when the warning is there and the message is clear, people aren't motivated to hear it. They don't wish to hear it.

We are surrounded every day by the miracles of life and death, by phenomena we can't grasp. On a day-to-day basis we should remember that we have no control over our health, or well-being, or even wealth; yet, to a large extent, still people don't want to listen. Or we may be willing to listen, but not willing to act. The people of Nuh's time heard his message and may have been very concerned about the coming flood, but how many of them actually left their homes, their wealth, their land, and their family to take action on this message? Is this a failure of the message or the messenger? Or was this always the plan of Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*)? I asked this same question in the first talk I gave. We will keep returning to that until we discover the answer. The message was given, and in some cases, people died. The message was given, and some people accepted it and their lives were changed drastically.

The message and the struggle to understand and accept it is still here today. Here we are again, repeating the message, and the next flood could be coming. Maybe the flood is out there already, and people are drowning in their own ignorance and arrogance. The challenge

of creating the proper relationship between the *baatīn* and the *dhaahir* is placed within us. Our success is manifest in how well we perceive and interface, by choice and destiny, with the Divine Attributes in our own lives. This is the way we build a bridge in that *barzakh*, between the *baatīn* and the *dhaahir*. When we choose compassion and mercy, or patience and tolerance over arrogance and blame, excuse-making and anger, then we are choosing to be in the Divine Presence. Then we are buying our 'flood insurance' that will affirm the intention of Allah for our soul, written in the Book of Destiny (*Lawhi Mahfudh*). We are extending into this world the essential core soul of the inner world, of the *baatīn*, until our life, our world becomes saturated with the tranquility (*sakeenah*), the peaceful qualities of the *baatīn*. In other words, the idols die, and the truth lives.

What are the inner and the outer meanings of the Flood? The tendency of many westerners when they embrace the spiritual path is to make analogies, to give meaning other than just the textual, theological meaning. We want to interpret the story of the flood; maybe we don't want to particularly believe there really was a flood. Instead, you'd rather ask: What does it symbolize? We feel much more comfortable with the metaphors and analogies. Try, today, to understand these things as both *dhaahir* and *baatīn*. Take them as a metaphor, but understand they were real; they actually happened. Just as the tsunami in Japan was real, or Hurricane Sandy was real. Take these things as real, and let them challenge your intellectual superiority and your academic arrogance, but also understand that it is a metaphor too for what is happening in the world today. Look at the destruction in the world today. And look at the relationship between human-made destruction and Divine destruction, as seen with global warming. How far are we really from the next great flood, or the next great war? What is the relationship between the acts of God and the acts of man?

Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) asks us to accept certain things, and to act in a certain way – to act with certain faith, belief, and understanding, and trust, and service, to use those attributes of compassion, mercy, love, tolerance, patience, understanding, steadfastness, and justice in the *dhaahir*. When we do not, we are warned. The warning comes:

stop doing this. Stop putting carbon into the air. Nobody listens, so the hurricane comes. Large segments of the population are destroyed. And it is going to get worse. Instead of a hundred people dying, or 300, it will be 3,000 or a couple of hundred thousand, like who died in Indonesia from the tsunami. The warning remains, because the message is always where.

REMEMBRANCE AND MEMORY

When we hear this story of Sidna Nuh, the flood, and the struggle to save his family and his community, it speaks to us—we can relate to it, almost as if we remembered being there. I want to conclude today by speaking about the significance of remembering. In Surah al-Qamar, Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) says in four places,

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ

WA LAQAD YASSARNĀ-L-QUR'ĀNA LI-Dh-DhIKRI
FA-HAL MIM-MUDDAKIR?

Surely, We have made this Qur'an easy to remember.
Are there any who will remember? [54:17]

He's saying, "I made it easy to remember; but you are not remembering." Most people think [they are remembering], because they have sat and memorized Qur'an; but they have forgotten what it means. Let me tell you another way of looking at this. We all know that the purpose of this life is to remember Allah and be in the state of remembrance, outward and inward; and yet, we forget, just like the people of Nuh's community, who forgot so completely that they even forgot what they forgot. They forgot until all they remembered; all they taught their children was a life for forgetting. But isn't it true that you can only remember what you experienced? Hold that thought for a few minutes; I will return to it.

There are two kinds of *dhikr*. One is remembering something that was present in your heart, but made absent after it appeared and existed. Something happened; it stopped happening, and you are

trying to remember it. The other kind of *dhikr* is remembering or recalling something that is imprinted within your *fitrah*, your innermost nature. It's part of your design; it's the essence of the human being. When you think about remembering Allah, what is it you think about remembering? *Muddakir* is not just about remembering some words from Qur'an, or some story in Qur'an about the prophets, or some occasion. It's about a very specific form of human memory capacity. One modern writer¹ called this "spiritual auditory mirror memory." What this really means is you are remembering events that happened before you lived, events that didn't happen directly to you, but which are imprinted on the soul of humanity. You remember Nuh and the Ark. You remember Adam and the Garden. You remember Musa and Khidr. You remember Ibrahim and the Fire. You remember events in the past that you weren't there to see happen. *Muddakir* refers to a pre-eternal primordial form of remembering through the words and through the sounds of the Qur'an, as though you were present.

The Qur'an was revealed 1,434 years ago. It recounts stories, like the story we heard today, that happened 3-4,000 years before that, or maybe thousands more years before that. The one who is reading the Qur'an, or listening to stories from the Qur'an, as we are today, is permitted to remember something that you experienced when your *ruh* was present, before it was separated from Allah's *niyyat*. These memories were imprinted upon your soul, hence the attraction to the stories and the fact that they are still told. This "auditory reflective memory" means you can actually empathize and re-enact the fears, the hopes, the losses, the admonitions, and the gains that not only individuals pass through, but whole nations pass through. The Qur'an talks about a nation that was destroyed in the story of Nuh. It also tells about battles and empires. By the Mercy of Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*), we can actually empathize with those events and learn from those mistakes in the realm of the *ru'ya*.

One way of conceptualizing of this is to imagine a person who watches themselves in the mirror. Either you are following the mirror, or the mirror is following your actions in reflecting them.

¹ Dara Shayda

Only in this case, the mirror is made of words and sounds; we are looking into the mirror of the sounds of the Qur'an. Allah says:

وَلَقَدْ تَرَكْنَاهَا آيَةً فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدْكِرٍ

WA LAQAD TARAKNĀHĀ ĀYATAN FA-HAL MIM-MUDDAKIR?

We have left these signs for all time, but who is there to be *muddakir* (the rememberer)? [54:15]

THE SCIENCE OF MEMORY

We often ask: how are you supposed to learn from some other person's experience? How can we help our children to learn from our experiences—without them having to make the same mistakes that we have made? Similarly, Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) has provided for us the tools to learn—in an organic way—from the trials and struggles of our forefathers, through the words and memories of the Qur'an. This is not just metaphorical, but also a scientific reality. There are brain scans / MRIs that show that when a person listens to music, certain parts of their brain were stimulated in the MRI. A similar part in their brain was stimulated when they played the piano themselves, but the piano was rigged and made no sound. They had a memory of being present in a past event. We all have a memory of all of these events—the 950 years of perseverance of Sidna Nuh, the Flood, the Ark. When you are in remembrance, you are actually there, chemically, in your mind.

In one study of neurons firing in monkeys, one scientist reported, that the same cells responded when a monkey performed an action, as when that monkey heard the sound of that same action being performed by another monkey. In another study, researchers contrasted the brain activity of an expert pianist and non-musicians. In one condition, both groups listened to piano music. In another, they pressed random keys on a piano keyboard that was rigged so it would not produce any sound. In each condition, participant's brains were scanned using an MRI. The results showed that when listening

to piano music, pianists activated the same region of the brain that was active while playing the piano keyboard, but in non-pianist these regions of the brain were not active.

Remembering through Qur'an is very similar to this scientific discovery. Certain portions of our spiritual brain are activated when we hear stories like the one of Sidna Nuh. When the action is done by others, the same area of the brain is activated as if the action was done by the listener himself. In the spiritual case of the person hearing the Qur'an with an open heart, the sounds and stories of people and nations who were created and destroyed, or the reflections of what transpired in the realm of the *malakut* or *jabarut*, is activated through remembering. This act of *dhikr*/remembering activates all of our empathetic memories of the time when our soul was present. Our memory is accessing the innermost *fitrah*—the design, the template, the moment of our own creation. The sounds of the Qur'an, of the *dhikr*, are reflections deep from the essence of our *fitrah* within us; otherwise, it wouldn't be accessible to us. You *are* there and you *were* there!

“REMBEMER ME”

It is important to note that Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*) uses the term, 'remember,' not the term 'discover.' Allah doesn't say, "Discover Me and I will discover you. Find Me and I'll find you." He says, "Remember Me." That is the reason, in a sense, that the prophets came; it is the reason behind the *awliyaa'*, the purpose of the *shuyukb*—to save the self from the physical limitations of this world; to link us back to what our soul already knows; what is already imprinted on our character; to our experience of the Divine reality, the Divine presence; to move us from the realm of destruction and corruption to the realm of peace and tranquility, a paradisiacal realm, by remembrance; to remember what was forgotten.

Nuh عليه السلام remembered, but he couldn't convince people, even his own family, to remember what had happened. They couldn't reconnect with their purpose, their soul. To remember means to regain what was forgotten, and what was forgotten was the place of origin and the destination. Your own experience is always easier to

remember. Do you remember the first car you drove, the first car you owned? Do you remember where you went to college? It's easy to remember, because it was your experience. You contemplate them knowing the richness of detail in things you have actually experienced.

Spiritual memory, equally rich in detail and depth, exists in the realm of your soul, prior to your biological form. You can turn these beautiful and unique memories into healing thoughts. They are a medicine for the soul and for the body. Allah invites us to ponder over these words of the Qur'an, and to let the sounds and meanings of those words form thoughts and emotions. Remembering is a healing of our inner wounds and removing the cancers of this life, caused by our personal distractions, desires, and forgetfulness. It is a cure for the illnesses we accumulate because of inappropriate actions, inappropriate speech, inappropriate thoughts, company, and interaction with the pollution and corruption of the world.

وَنَزَّلَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

WA NUNAZZILU MINA-L-QUR'ANI MA HUWA
SHIFAA'UNW-WA RAHMATUL-LI-L-
MU'MININA...

We sent down stage by stage in the Qur'an that which is
a healing and a mercy to those who believe and
remember... [17:82]

That's what is happening when we remember, but we have to remember to remember. When we are remembering Allah, we are remembering from our soul what has already been experienced. We are empathizing with Nuh عليه السلام as his son is drowned beneath the waves. We are feeling the shame of Hazrat Adam عليه السلام for eating the fruit. We are feeling the agony of Sidna Ibrahim عليه السلام as he accepts the order of Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*) to sacrifice his son. We are feeling with Hajar as she runs in the desert, or with Maryam عليها السلام, alone under a palm tree giving birth to her son. You empathize with these moments because you were there.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I want to share with you a beautiful *hadith* of the Prophet ﷺ, a *hadith* that encompasses the values that we have been speaking of today: values of humility, or faith, of perseverance, and most of all, of hearing the call and accepting the destiny of Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*). Abu Abbas Abdullah reported:

One day I was behind the Prophet ﷺ, and he said to me: "Young man, I shall teach you some words of advice:

Be mindful of Allah and you will find Him in front of you.

If you ask, ask of Allah; if you seek help, seek help of Allah.

Know that if the nation were to gather together to benefit you with anything, it would benefit you only with something that Allah had already prescribed for you, and that, if they gather to harm you with anything, they would harm you only with something Allah had already prescribed for you.

The pens have been lifted and the pages have dried.

Be mindful of Allah, and you will find Him before you.

Get to know Allah in prosperity, and He will know you in adversity.

Know that what has passed you by was not going to befall you, and that what has befallen you was not going to pass you by.

And know that victory comes with patience, relief with affliction, and ease with hardship."

CLOSING DU^cAA

YAA MAWJUUDAN ^cINDA-Sh-ShADAAA'IDI,
YAA KHA^cFIYYA-L-LUTFI, YAA LA^cTEEFA-S-SUN^cI,
YAA HA^cLEEMAN, LA^cA YA^cJILUQDI HAAJATEE
BIRAH^cMATIKA, YAA ARHAMA-R-RAAHIMEEN.
SUBHAANAKA ^cALAA HILMIKA BA^cDA ^cILMIK.
SUBHANAKA ^cALAA ^cAFWIKA BA^cDA QUDRATIK.

O Existent One, O Thou Who art Present in all difficulties,
O Thou of Hidden Kindness, of Subtle Making,
O Gentle One, Who does not hasten, fulfill my need,
with Thy Mercy, O Most Merciful of the merciful.
Glory be to Thee on Thy Grace, after Thy Knowledge.
Glory be to Thee on Thy Forgiveness, after Thy Power.

ALLAHUMMA, YASSIR LANAA UMUURANAA
MA^cA-R-RAAHATI LI-QULUUBINAA WA ABDAANINAA,
WA-S-SALAAMATU WA-L-^cAAFIYATI
FEE DEENINAA WA DUNYANAA;
WA KUL-LANAA SAAHIBAN FEE SAFARINAA
WA KHALEEFATAN FEE AHLINAA.

O Allah, make it easy for us in all our affairs,
with ease for our hearts and our bodies,
and safety and protection
in our religion and our worldly affairs;
and become for us a companion in our journey
and a guardian for our families.